

The University of Chicago

THE ATTITUDE OF THE NORTHERN
CLERGY TOWARD THE
SOUTH, 1860-65

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

1939

By

CHESTER FORRESTER DUNHAM

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CHAPTER III

THE CLERGY AND THE SOUTHERN WAY OF LIFE

The Southern way of life, as a distinctive civilization, culture, and social order, was formulated into a concept or pattern by the more philosophic thinkers of the Northern clergy. The nature of society in the Southland, revealed in its classes, institutions, ideas, and ideals, was deemed peculiar if not unique to that section of the nation. The problem, therefore, is not to ascertain what the actual facts were concerning the South, but rather to discover what the clergy thought those facts were, for those clerical opinions defined and determined their resultant attitudes, and in turn, their homiletic message and personal influence.

Divergent Civilizations

In general, the South incarnated the civilization of slavery, while the North represented that of freedom, not an expedient of the moment, but a process of the centuries. Differences in time, circumstance, section, and denomination, no doubt colored and intensified the portrait the clergy painted of Southern life. But in the main, with few exceptions, a continuing clear-cut sketch of the Southern way of life is drawn from 1850 through 1865, by the ministers of such churches as: Baptist, Christian, Congregational, Episcopal, Friend, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Unitarian, and Universalist, from such metropolitan centers as: Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati, from such smaller cities as Hartford, Buffalo, and Chicago, and still smaller communities as Andover and Dorchester. Massachusetts and New York frame the picture.

The State of the Nation was the Thanksgiving sermon topic in 1850 of the Rev. Theodore Parker delivered at the Melodeon in Boston. The state of the nation included an appreciation of the figs and grapes of New England, the North and the West; and the depreciation of the thistles and thorns of the South. A different

seed had been sown in the South from that in the North and a different crop has been the result. The purpose of settlement, character of the people and achievements of North and South reveal more differences than likenesses. The virulent opposition of Dr. Parker to slavery was now intensified by the recent passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. In his sectional comparison the Boston clergyman said:

All the north is like New England. . . . essentially so. The West is our own daughter. The South, in the main had a very different origin from the North. . . . few persons settled there for religion's sake; or for the sake of freedom in the State. It was not a moral idea which sent men to Virginia, Georgia, or Carolina. . . . The difference in the seed will appear in the difference in the crop. . . . The South with its despotic idea, dishonors labor, but wishes to compromise between its idleness and its appetite, and so kidnaps men to do its work. . . .¹

The Northern Iron was the Fast Day theme of April, 1854, of Dr. Horace Bushnell of the North Congregational Church of Hartford, Connecticut, several weeks before the passage of the Kansas Nebraska Act. Dr. Bushnell spoke on the same high cultural level which characterized his master-work, "Christian Nurture," which challenged American theology and religious evangelism. He found that freedom inspired literature and slavery degraded it. The South in comparison with the North was weak in learning, culture, art, and letters although proficient in dining, hunting, harangue and political skill. He said:

The scholarship, the philosophic and esthetic culture, the originative art. . . . are barbarized of necessity by the element of slavery and make a sorry figure in the world of letters. . . . some honorable exceptions are dinners, horses, hounds and pistols. . . . a certain power of harangue which is not oratory, and as much political skill as does not amount to statesmanship. . . .²

The North, in the opinion of Dr. Bushnell, had iron; the South lacked that essential.

Within a month after John Brown led his raid on the U. S. Government arsenal at Harper's Ferry, the old northwest spoke through the columns of the Congregational Herald of Chicago, warning the South that John Brown had disclosed to that section that it was living on a sleeping volcano. The editor traced historically the divergent civilizations in the nation and the inevita-

¹(Boston: Wm. Crosby & H. P. Nichols, 1851), pp. 12-16.

²(Hartford: Edwin Hunt & Son, 1854), p. 21.

bility of the strife. He discerned:

This 'irrepressible conflict' began when in the same year the Mayflower landed her freemen and a Dutch ship her slaves upon our Atlantic coast. When our National Confederation was organized, there was already an active contest. . . . [slavery] was invigorated by a decoction of Cotton-Gin. . . . The supremacy in our national life was soon gained and has been maintained to this day. . . . until by the Fugitive Bill humanity is enacted into humanity is enacted into treason, until by the Dred Scott decision Slavery is proclaimed national, and freedom sectional, so that, as in Kansas, it is obliged to live in new territory in spite of Federal persecution, and until the piracy of the slave-trade is treated by the government as such only in name. . . . Even now the conflict thickens in its irresistibility. . . .³

Compromise appeared impossible.

Some three weeks before South Carolina passed its ordinance of secession, Dr. Henry Ward Beecher, son of President Lyman Beecher of Lane Theological Seminary (Cincinnati), and brother of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe of Uncle Tom's Cabin fame, discussed Southern philosophy in his Thanksgiving sermon of 1860 from the pulpit of Plymouth Congregational Church, Brooklyn, New York. In tracing the Northern and Southern differences back to their source in botanical and agricultural terms, he discovered the North had planted in colonial days the good seed of liberty while the South had sown the evil seed of slavery. Now with the harvest at hand, the South desired to reap good fruit, but was about to experience a whirlwind. North and South were diametrically different.⁴

In a Fast Day sermon early in January 1861, Dr. Henry Whitney Bellows of the leading Unitarian Church in the metropolis, All Souls, was not even willing to admit that the South had a civilization, but rather embodied a barbarous institution, which the North was bound to sweep from the face of the earth. Dr. Bellows was the founder of the Unitarian Weekly, the Christian Inquirer,

³VII, No. 33, 2.

⁴Patriotic Addresses (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1888), p. 234. ". . . . poisonous seed was sown in colonial days. The North chose to weed it out. The South determined to cultivate it. . . . The harvest time has now come. . . . They sowed the wind and they are about to reap the whirlwind. . . . It is this that convulses the South. They wish to reap the fruits of liberty from the seed of slavery. . . . The South claims that the United States government is bound to make slavery as good as liberty for all purposes of national life. That is the root of their philosophy. . . . The Southern States, then, have organized society around a rotten core; slavery; the North. . . . about a vital heart: liberty. . . ."

and later was president of the United States Sanitary Commission during the war. He denied that the power of political parties endangered slavery but that the growth of civilization was pronouncing the doom of slavery. He realized how deep rooted the slavery system was, how it engulfed the slaveholders and colored their convictions. He would inspire hate for the economic system of slavery, but love for the helpless slaveholder. He asserted that

it is not party power. . . . which threatens slavery. It is simply civilization in its necessary progress which is doom-
ing it to ruin. . . . They [slaveholders] are, for the most
part, helpless victims, and their opinions the inevitable
opinions of men in their circumstances. . . . It is love of
the slaveholder which inspires our hatred for what is ruining
him. . . . It is only between civilization and the barbarous
institution that an irrepressible enmity exists. . . . The
real issue [is] between the Christian civilization. . . . and
domestic slavery. . . ."⁵

Again a dire chasm!

In the interval between the formation of the Southern Confederacy in February 1861 and the firing upon Fort Sumter in April, an important election sermon was delivered in early March by the Rev. Professor Austin Phelps, later president of Andover Theological Seminary (Congregational), before the Governor of Massachusetts and State officials, at the Old South Congregational Church in Boston, the "cathedral church" of American Congregationalism. The ethical advice given by this professorial clergyman to Bay State Statesmen and politicians was direct and to the point.

Two opposing types of civilization are in conflict here, and have been from the infancy of our Union. The conflict is not one of physical resources, but of ideas. The strifes of political parties have been, as they often are in the history of great nations, ripples on the surface of affairs. Underneath, a drifting of social forces has been going on. . . . So that the freedom, and if the freedom, the happiness, and the culture, and the character of every man, woman, and child, of the future generations of America, swing on the pivot of the African question today. . . . God tries nations by the conflict of ideas, brought into conflict in the exigencies of national life. . . . Just this, then, I must believe is the mission of New England at the present juncture of affairs; it is to stand with temperate, but firm resolve, by the hereditary ideas of liberty. . . . We owe this to the future of the South, no less than to our own. . . ."⁶

The foregoing news item was reported in the Congregational Herald of Chicago.

⁵Christian Inquirer (New York City), XV, No. 16, 2.

⁶VIII, No. 49, 2.

On April 12, 1861, at 4:30 a.m. Fort Sumter was shelled, and after a severe bombardment of thirty-six hours, was surrendered April 13th. "The Battle Set in Array" was the timely sermon-topic of Dr. Henry Ward Beecher, April 14th, at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn. The heart of the message dealt with a comparison of the Southern and the Northern spirit of patriotism. He declared:

There has been a spirit of patriotism in the North; but never, within my memory, in the South. I never heard a man from the South speak of himself as an American. Men from the South speak of themselves as Southerners. . . . And in the South the feeling has been sectional, local. The people there have been proud, not that they belong to the nation, but that they were born where the sun burns. They are hot, narrow and boastful, for out of China there is not so much conceit as exists among them. They have been devoid of that large spirit which takes in the race, and the nation, and its institutions, and its history. . . . The war is brought to us. . . . I hold that it is ten thousand times better to have war than to have human slavery.⁷

Dr. Beecher was one of the founders of the Independent newspaper, and was editor-in-chief from 1861 to 1863. This periodical was described by the editor of the Quarterly Church Review (Episcopal) as having "a larger circulation and wider influence than any other professional religious newspaper in the country." The editorial comment of the Independent on the national situation in August 1861 was significant. "This war is nothing else than another stage in the conflict of the ages--irreconcilable and irrepressible--between the civilization of freedom and the so-called civilization which has slavery for its basis. . . ." ⁸

Dr. Edward Everett Hale, author of The Man Without a Country, one of the best sellers of the Civil War era, and one which greatly strengthened the morale of the Union Cause, was also a clergyman. In the summer of 1862 he felt that the South represented a state of semi-civilization and that

the end of the present war must be the civilization of the Southern States. It will not really end until that civilization is secured. . . . the semi-civilization of the crudest agriculture, of vassal slavery and that social order which belongs to them. We are to introduce into the South and Southwest, new men, new life, and a higher civilization. . . . ⁹

In September 1863, the year of the battles of Gettysburg

⁷Patriotic Addresses, pp. 276-77.

⁸(New York City), XIII, No. 664, 4.

⁹Christian Register (Boston), XLI, No. 34, 133.

and Vicksburg, the Rev. J. N. Murdock (Baptist) preached a sermon at Brookline, Massachusetts on the theme, "Two Civilizations." In historical imagination the preacher crossed the Atlantic to delve into British history to uncover the origins of American ills. He disclosed the fact that from the foundation of the nation, two antagonistic principles of life had been introduced from the Old World, and that as a result, two conflicting civilizations existed in the New World and strove mightily for mastery.¹⁰

Upon the basis of a three weeks inspection tour through the "slavedom" of Kentucky and Tennessee, the Rev. Nathaniel Hall, in May 1864, presented a sermonic report of his trip to his parishioners of the First Congregational Church of Dorchester, Massachusetts. He was convinced that there was an inherent difference between the civilization of the North and that of the South and he phrased his address accordingly: The Moral Significance of the Contrasts between Slavery and Freedom. In the South he saw an absence, more or less, of the indispensable features of civilization. The way of life was below that of any group in New England and unthrift and wretchedness characterized especially the lower classes in the South, below the level of simple decency. This lack of refinements, comforts and conveniences, this lack of neat, trim, and orderly dwellings and enclosures, and this lack of the appointments and furnishings of domestic life, left a depressing impression upon the mind of Mr. Hall. He said:

It seems indeed to the Northern stranger that he has fallen back generations from the civilization he has left. It is not a mere difference in manners, habits, pursuits, speech, you notice, but of ideas as well. . . . You seem to yourself to have come among a different nation, upon a different age; among those who have been slumbering, while the rest of the world has moved on.

In other words, Mr. Hall felt that Freedom made the North, alive, thrifty and neat; and that Slavery condemned the South to sleeping sickness, unthrift, and wretchedness. The observer was not inter-

¹⁰Christian Watchman and Reflector (Boston), XLIV, No. 38, 2. "Jamestown and Plymouth represented on these shores the antagonistic principles of Cavalier and Roundhead, and renewed here the old struggle between the chartered prerogative and imprescriptible right, which had raged for centuries, under various names and guises, in the mother isle. The Cavalier brought with him those ideas of prescription and caste which had led him to battle, from the time of the Norman conquest, for aristocracy and absolutism. The Puritan brought with him those ideas of individual freedom and equality, which. . . contained the germs of Republican life. . ."

ested simply in political, economic and social differences but the moral contrasts of the Northern civilization of liberty with the Southern existence of bondage.¹¹

Shortly after the assassination of President Lincoln, the Rev. Daniel C. Eddy of the Baldwin Place Congregational Church of Boston delivered an ecclesiastical philippic in which he based his estimate of Southern philosophy upon a summary of violent deeds. Slavery, barbarism and atrocity were the key words of his sweeping indictment. His conclusion was that the South was fundamentally different from the North. He preached:

Argue as we may, our Southern people are a difficult race. Slavery has given them a different code of morals, a different law of ethics, a different idea of religion. They have been educated under a different civilization and are another people. Slavery has barbarized them, and made them a people with whom we have little in common. We had an idea of Southern civilization when Judge Hoar was driven out of Charleston. . . . when Sumner was bleeding in the Federal Senate. . . . when ornaments were made for Southern ladies of the bones of the brave soldiers killed at Bull Run. . . . in the atrocities perpetrated upon our poor soldiers. . . . taken prisoners. . . . And now we have another exhibition of it in the base, wanton, assassination of the President. . . .¹²

Mr. Eddy further desired prompt action to transform this divergent civilization south of the Mason and Dixon Line.

Substituting the word character for civilization, the Rev. Phillips Brooks (later bishop), the young rector of twenty-nine, of the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church of Philadelphia, fervently compared the "two American natures" or "characters" in his Lincoln Memorial sermon, delivered the first Sunday after the death of the President.¹³ A biographer of Mr. Brooks has considered this Memorial effort among his "great sermons."¹⁴ For years the history of America had been the impending collision of these two types of American life, the true nature of the North, and the false of the South.¹⁵

¹¹(Boston: Walker, Wise, 1864), pp. 8-10.

¹²The Martyr President (Boston: Graves & Young, 1865), pp. 16-17.

¹³The Life and Death of Abraham Lincoln (Philadelphia: Henry B. Ashmead, 1865), pp. 10-19.

¹⁴A. V. G. Allen, Phillips Brooks (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1907), p. 182.

¹⁵Phillips Brooks, The Life and Death of Abraham Lincoln, pp. 10-19. "There was no American character embracing the

The final overthrow of Southern civilization by coercion was ably depicted by James T. Robinson in his national anniversary address in the Baptist Church at North Adams, Massachusetts, on Independence Day, 1865. Rising to an eloquent historical climax, he invoked the shades of Plymouth, and Jamestown, of Puritan and of Cavalier. Now that the trial of strength was over the speaker felt that the united nation would rise to new glory and splendor. He said:

It is over, Aristocracy and despotism are overwhelmed. The greatest conspiracy against the Free institutions, and the progress of mankind, is annihilated. The eleventh century crumbled before the nineteenth. The Slave Ship yields to the May Flower. Plymouth conquers Jamestown. The Barbarism of the Plantation kneels to the Christian civilization of the Puritans. Once again the Cavalier flies before the Puritan, as his ancestors two hundred years before on the fields of Marston Moor, and Nasby, showed their silken backs to Cromwell. The trial and test of two hundred years is over. The great Republic, tried by fire, saddened and chastened by the conflict, but terrible and glorious, ascends through smoke and flame to unending sway and splendor.¹⁶

The orator concluded with eight prophetic words: "Now comes the trial of Peace and Reconstruction."¹⁷

The Rev. Alonzo Quint, Congregational Chaplain in the Civil War, leading denominational authority on Polity, and prolific news commentator on war themes, shared the views of Mr. Robinson, in his election sermon in Boston early in January of 1866. "Massachusetts idea," he affirmed,

spread over the North; went with its emigrants over the great North-west; and came in conflict with the despotism of the slaveholder. . . . When the glittering chivalry of the Southerner dashed against the iron race, it splintered like glass.

land. There were two characters, with impulses of irrepressible and deadly conflict. . . . The one nature. . . . set itself to discover new ways for the new duties. . . . The other nature. . . . set itself. . . . to build anew the structure of a feudalism. . . . The one magnified labor, the other nature depreciated and despised it. The one honored the laborer and the other scorned him. . . . One nature was full of the influences of Freedom, the other nature was full of the influences of Slavery. . . . One was the Spirit of the North, the other was the Spirit of the South. The history of our country for many years is the history of how these two elements of American life approached collision. . . . It was the conflict of the two American natures, the false and the true. . . ."

¹⁶National Anniversary Address (North Adams, Massachusetts: W. H. Phillips, 1865), pp. 16-19.

¹⁷Ibid.

No wonder the Richmond editor, during the war, wished that the pestilent Mayflower had sunk in mid-ocean with all its freight. . . ."

While the war was over, officially, from the military standpoint, Mr. Quint believed that "the conflict of ideas" was not over and that "the doctrine of equal rights has still to be maintained against prejudice, pride, and a mistaken interest. . . ." ¹⁸

Probably this idea of divergent civilizations, the North so utterly unlike the South, played its part in the complexes of irrepressibility and irresistibility, in the sectional strife of the age. The Northern Clergy in the creation and nurture of public opinion radiated an emotionalized idea of divergency.

The Southern Social Order of Caste

Southern civilization was thought to be dominated by an aristocratic oligarchy, a wealthy slave-owning caste, to which all other classes in all phases of life, were subservient. The alleged superiority of this aristocracy included all Northerners, as well as all Southerners, an assertion particularly galling to many of the Clergy living north of the Mason and Dixon Line.

That this caste controlled the politics of the South and purposed to direct national affairs as well, was the contention of the Rev. Eden B. Foster in a sermon delivered in the John Street Congregational Church of Lowell, Massachusetts, in June 1854. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill had become a law on May 30th, an event that stirred many Northern Clergy to their homiletic depths or heights. These gentlemen of leisure were arrogant, parasitic politicians. ¹⁹ The warning title of Mr. Foster's sermon was "Perils of Freedom."

¹⁸ Annual Election Sermon (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1866), pp. 39-41.

¹⁹ The Rights of the Pulpit and Perils of Freedom, Two Discourses (Lowell: J. J. Judkins, 1854), pp. 45-57. ". . . the men of the South--the educated, the genteel, the aristocratic--are politicians from their childhood up. It is their study by day and their dream by night to attain office and honor in the general government, and to gain control of national affairs. They have nothing else to do. Work is not in their line--their plantations take care of them and theirs. Agriculture, manufactures, trade, are to them ignoble employments--They were not born to toil. . . . They are gentlemen at large. . . . They are guardians of the nation. . . . Politics is their business and politics their rest. . . . politics their study and politics their play, politics

To Mr. Foster's concept of the Southern planter-slave owner as an indolent politician, the editor of the Churchman (Episcopal) of New York City, in May 1861, added a colorful, re-characterization of that Southern master as a person of mixed qualities, a "fine, generous, overbearing, proud, pugnacious character whose good qualities, which are neither few nor small, are to a great extent, eclipsed by his domineering and boastful manner."20

That the Southern leader was virtually a feudal lord, was the thought conveyed by the editor of the Christian Advocate and Journal (Methodist) of New York, in contrasting the Northern social order of equality and democracy, with the inequality and caste of Southern society.

The Southern colonies were planted more by adventurers representing the Norman idea (feudalism), and with them a body of followers dependent and also servile. . . . Southern Society, then and always had these two extremes--the high toned gentlemen whose favorite political idea has been that of aristocracy and absolutism, and a miserable rabble without enterprise and wretched in the extreme; but the democratic equality which characterizes the North, they have known nothing about This conquest of theirs which was exhausted in England by the triumph of the Anglo-Saxon ideas, was transferred to this continent. A portion of the Southern people shared this democratic idea, but it never ruled there. . . . 21

Thus the Norman feudalistic principle of class overlordship ruled the South from colonial inception and was in secure permanent control.

The two-class idea was also shared by O. J. Wait, writing in the Christian Palladium (Christian) of New York. "The South is divided into two great classes--the lords and the slaves," asserted the writer. The lords symbolized "aristocracy" while "poverty was the badge of the slave. As for the poor white, in a slave state, "he is put as low or even lower than the slave," the border states excepted. Thus a middle class is virtually excluded from the Southern social order. 22

their meat and politics their drink. . . . They have furnished more presidents, more cabinet officers, more executive and judicial incumbents, more diplomatic charges and plenipotentiaries, more exalted functionaries of every kind than the North. . . . "

20 (New York), XXXI, No. 5, 32-33.

21 XXXVI, No. 23, 180.

22 XXX, Nos. 28, 29, 214.

The Rev. S. T. Spear in an article in the Evangelist (New School Presbyterian) of New York, included in his exposition, the usual concepts of feudalism, aristocracy, planter-dominance, and political control. The Southern States differed from the Northern in not being pure democracies but having at their heart the essence of feudalism. The planter-slave holder class dominate that section, politically, socially and economically. They are aristocratic patricians, the lords of the manor of slavery, and share the typical attitudes of superiority toward other classes, especially their slaves. The existence of a distinct middle class is virtually ignored.²³ Mr. Spear thus saw the planter-slave-owner as the feudal lord who wielded power supremely in the political realm but who also controlled the social and economic life as well.

The Independent of New York editorially in 1861 presented a penetrating and comparative analysis of Northern and Southern social orders, contrasting the labor systems, the educational policy, the sectional cultures and forms of religion. In the social order of the North "thought and utterance are free, and law spreads its equal protection over every human individual (while the South) regards the states as existing not for the equal benefit of all, but for the benefit of a dominant class, and under which innocent men are compelled to labor without wage. . . ."²⁴ Then the editor discussed the relationship of a slave economic order to law, learning, and Christianity. In the North legislation was based

²³XXXII, No. 31, 6. "The Southern Republics are not pure democracies. They contain in their bosom the feudal system in its very worst form embodied in a class of men denominated slaveholders . . . an aristocratic order. . . courteous toward equals, generous in their hospitality, sensitive as to their honor, imperious in their bearing, unaccustomed to labor, regarding labor as a badge of servility, having but little sympathy with the doctrine of popular rights, clamorous and very tenacious of their special privileges, and always ready for deeds of chivalry, all aristocratic classes form an order of men by themselves, born to command, but not to obey. Such, essentially, is the position of the slaveholding order of men at the South, especially the large planters. By education, interest, and habit, they are devoted to their peculiar institution. Slavery and cotton are their two principal ideas. They are the men, in the main who form the South. As to practical policy, they are the South. They give to Southern society their own ideas. . . . They, nevertheless, are the ruling class. They attend to the politics of the South; they manage its government, and fill the places of public honor. . . ."

²⁴XIII, No. 664, 4.

on the idea of human equality, in the South inequality; in the North public education for the many, in the South for the few; in the North a free religion faced the forces of evil, and in the South, an enslaved religion, bound to the economic status quo. In plain speech, the social order of the South was characterized by special privilege, social inequality, economic monopoly, educational retardation, cultural sterility, and religious subservience.²⁵

The war years of 1861, 1862, and 1863 intervened and in 1864 the Independent published a critical analysis of Southern racial origins, with special reference to the First Families of Feudalism, as of under-world ancestry. While both many nationalities mingled in the Northern and Southern colonies in early days, the riff raff of Europe wended their way southward. Southern aristocracy, therefore, shields a most unsavory lineage.

The aristocracy, therefore, which maintains its descent from brothels and bridewells, is welcome to the savor of such a lineage. . . . We know that Southern aristocracy is not synonymous with comfort, thrift, cleanliness, and usefulness, honesty, decency, or common humanity: we have learned to recognize it by the opposite of these traits. . . .²⁶

"Quintus," the Congregational news-commentator, in an article from the army in the field to the Western Christian Advocate, in the spring of 1864, treated at some length, such groups in the Southern social order as the "poor whites," the "white trash," and the "middle class." He made a careful distinction between

²⁵Ibid. "On the one side of that line, the fundamental idea of legislation, in the states, is that principle of human equality, on the other side, Christian devotion takes the form of gratitude to that divine benignity which has considerably created negroes for the very purpose of relieving white men from the degradation of labor. On the one side, every state has its system of public instruction not only for the few but for the many. . . . On the other side, ignorance of the degraded laboring class, is established by law, and guarded by penalties. On the one side, free labor, intelligent and skillful, is creating and accumulating wealth. . . . on the other, the toil of brutish drudges impelled by fear, produces wealth only by the accidental and temporary monopoly of a single product. . . . On the one side the progress of a civilization is producing historians, poets, artists, inventors, and philosophers. On the other there is no lack of native talent, and no lack of leisure in the ruling class; but how little has there been of such contributions to the intellectual wealth of our common country. On the one side, a free Christianity is grappling with every form of evil. . . . on the other the enslaved Christianity. . . . is put to the ignominious task of holding forth a divine warrant for 'slavery as it is'. . . ."

²⁶Ibid., XVI, No. 790, 4.

these two "poor" groups, noting that the "white trash" composed a class by themselves, that they are unhealthy, under-nourished, unintelligent, illiterate, shiftless, ambition-less, and given to profanity, tobacco, drink, and fighting.²⁷

Leaving the "white trash" an unsolved problem, "Quintus" turned to the class of "poor whites" which he found more or less isolated, held in disdain by the dominant slaveholding class, and lacking ambition. There were some energetic "poor whites" who migrated to the Northern cities to try their luck, thus weakening the group back home, as a social unit. Upon this class the writer felt sure, the North must rely in reorganizing the institutions of the South. He located the "poor whites" "in those portions where wealth is not rapidly produced. . . . the settlements are neighborhoods. . . . necessarily small and isolated. . . . held in more or less contempt by the slaveholder, they lack the ambition to rise in the world. . . . and are continually weakened by losing the energetic men, who go to the cities to seek new fortunes in the free states. . . ."²⁸ As for the middle class, the reporter found only a slight trace of it in the cities. The middle class could not arise because the enterprising men who enter the professions or become substantial business men, ally and identify themselves with the slave aristocracy and acquire plantations, themselves.²⁹

²⁷(Cincinnati), XXXI, No. 18, 138. "They are found in every portion of the South, but nowhere in large numbers. You come in contact with them in the outskirts of the towns, on old wornout plantations, and in the woods in the vicinity of the large and rich neighborhoods. There is an air of worthlessness and conscious degradation about their weather-beaten cabins. . . . I have never seen among them a single mark of pride, industry, thrift, or honor; and they always suffer in comparison with the negroes of the same district. . . . They have a strange unhealthy, sallowness of complexion, weak or inflamed eyes, flat chests, and round shoulders. But what fixes your attention is the lack of intelligence and energy which reigns in the household. . . . Not one of them can read; they know nothing at all of the world, they have no ambition, no desires to better their condition. Men, women, and children both smoke and chew tobacco, drink whiskey, fight, swear, and practice all the inexpensive vices. . . ."

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid. "Everywhere the man of spirit or energy comes from abroad, or rises in the midst of them whether he is ambitious of wealth, political, or literary position, as soon as possible identifies himself with the slave aristocracy. . . . generally lawyers, preachers, merchants, and manufacturers are owners of slave plantations. . . ."

Several months later the same writer in the same paper, recorded his findings concerning the "Southern Women." Dismissing the Southern claim that womanhood in that section was elevated to the highest position on earth, in comparison with that of the North, or any foreign land, "Quintus" believed that the true character of Southern womanhood, could only be understood by viewing it in relation to the slave woman. He had in mind the Southern women to the manor born, rather than to the cottage or cabin. He felt that the slave woman, white master, and southern mistress were all degraded by the presence of slavery, conspicuously a moral disintegration.³⁰

"Quintus" found the attitude of Southern women toward taking the oath of allegiance to the North most unethical, that they, attached no sacredness to the pledge, and boasted that they intended to violate it.³¹ He summarized his views of Southern Society:

The more I see of Southern society, the more I am satisfied that it was rotten to the core. . . . The idea of virtue has nearly died out; honesty was at a discount. . . . faith was looked upon as a weakness, and the worst features of barbarism have made our blood run cold, as at Fort Pillow. . . . the fair ones who have purchased ease and culture at the price of their degradation, will have paid to them measure for measure. . . .³²

Returning from the front, "Quintus" resumed his clerical name of the Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, Congregational minister, from Massachusetts. On April 16, 1865, the day after the death of President Lincoln, he spoke on the theme: Southern Chivalry, and What the Nation Ought to Do With It, at the North Congregational Church of New Bedford, Massachusetts. After setting up the romantic concept of the Southern gentleman, Dr. Quint proceeded to riddle it by a realistically recolored portrait. Instead of the

³⁰Ibid., No. 29, p. 225. "The degradation of the slave woman has been sedulously hidden from the North. . . . The ladies of the South consented to all this. . . . saw their husbands and sons polluting soul and body, degrading honorable blood and pure domestic traditions, and held their peace, because the slave woman was. . . . made to relieve her from daily physical toil. . . . So you find the Southern woman proud and arrogant, and nearly always prating about her character and assuring you that she is a lady. . . . I am speaking of the class who are slaveholders, and live in mansions, not of the humbler class, who have more of the usual virtues of their sex. . . ."

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

noble, generous, hospitable, patriarchal protector, gentleman and statesman, Mr. Quint sketched a revengeful, treacherous, murderous liar and cheat. Therefore, according to this New England clerical observer, the Southern gentleman, planter, slave-owner, was iniquitous in theory, and in practice, in idea and in deed. Such comprehensive analyses of Southern society are rare among clerical writers, although brief characterizations are frequent.³³

The Southern Barbarous Slavocracy

The peculiar nature of the institution of negro slavery, and its effect upon the attitudes and morals of Southern society, provided abundant material for the Northern Clergy in shaping and crystalizing this phase of the Southern way of life.

The Southern Plantation System was severely condemned in June 1854 by the Rev. Eden B. Foster of the John Street Congregational Church of Lowell, Massachusetts. Inherent in the system were such evils as cruelty, ignorance, immorality, and sin.³⁴

³³(New Bedford, Massachusetts: Mercury Job Press, 1865), pp. 31-35. "It was long the feeling that a Southern Gentleman was the perfection of humanity. He was a noble, generous man, above mean and petty acts. He was no Yankee, to love a dollar. A kind of patriarchal protector, in his lordly mansion, to the attached and happy servants, who could not take care of themselves. Rather passionate, but that was the natural fault of high-toned feeling. In government he took offices not for money, but because he was educated for statesmanship. . . . It took time to find out that this was a delusion, that he was, with exceptions of course, revengeful, treacherous, murderous. That he was a liar, and a cheat. That he loved money dearly and wrung it out of the tears of his bondsmen. That his lordly mansion was nine times in ten, unfit for a sty for northern pigs. That his slaves were chained, and whipped and branded. That his statesmanship was mere craft, to get salaries on the one hand, and, on the other, to enable him to get and to keep more negroes. That he was lazy, and selfish, and often stupidly ignorant. That his hospitality always wanted pay for the wayfarer's dinner, except when his ruling principle, vanity, prevented. . . . The Southern gentleman lives by robbing. His property, when he is a slave-master, is robbery in itself. He makes men work without adequate wages. . . . To rule without law is another characteristic. . . . Hence with unrestrained passions, licentiousness is inevitable. . . . To kill without law, is another prerogative. . . . Without law, it is not a strange thing to carry pistols and bowie knives; assassinate in houses and streets; lynch men who happen to think differently. . . ."

³⁴The Rights of the Pulpit and the Perils of the Nation, Two Discourses (Lowell: J. J. Judkins, 1854), pp. 34-35. "Look at the system of plantation cruelty at the South. As a system it is one of domineering despotism containing all the elements of the

The degrading effect of slavery upon the slave-holder, and upon law and order, was discussed in April 1861 by the Rev. T. B. Turner, pastor of the Warren Street Universalist Church of Boston. In speaking of the slave-owner Mr. Turner asserted:

He treats his equals as his inferiors, and is overbearing and insolent to them as his slaves. The pistol, the bowie knife, the bludgeon are his constant companions, and the emblems of his social condition; and the scenes in Congress, and the fearful street forays, and the murderous attacks on personal enemies. . . . the necessary social tendency of Slavery is to the lowest forms of civilization. . . .³⁵

He saw, also, the widespread evils of slavery in its effect upon the other classes of the South. He declared that slavery not only brutalized the owner, it also degraded "the artisan and mechanic class. . . . It discourages the merchant and manufacturer. . . . it surely shuts out the master and owner from the noblest civilization."³⁶ The charge in this instance, is that slavery was an economic blight upon every class of Southern society.

The Churchman (Episcopal) of New York City, editorially, by implication, in May 1861, suggested the relationship of slavery to public morals, that the tendency of Southerners both individually and collectively was "to duelling and personal encounters," and that "tarring and feathering, and popular violence generally, are almost entirely confined to the South. . . ."³⁷

The menace of slavery to society as well as to the slave-owner, was asserted in an article by the Rev. S. T. Spear in the Evangelist (Presbyterian) of New York City in the summer of 1861. "The slave population must be taught to submit to the authority of a despotic will. They must be looked upon, and in many respects treated as if they were a hostile population. . . ."³⁸

most intolerable tyranny, rendering liberty and life insecure, governing by fear of bodily torture, substituting brute force for the rule of reason, leading on necessarily to personal combats and bloody, bold, noonday assassinations even among the white race. . . . taking away the key of knowledge. . . . compelling the ignorance of the slave. . . . rending family ties, parting husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, lovers and their betrothed. . . . making the family relationships a perfect nullity. . . . introducing unchaste license and profligate vices disfranchisement of free labor and the subjugation of free territory. . . . a system begun in wrong and perpetuated in sin."

³⁵The Trumpet and Universalist Magazine (Boston), XXXIII, No. 49, 193.

³⁶Ibid. ³⁷XXXI, No. 5, 32-33. ³⁸XXXII, No. 31, 6.

The dangers of Southern Slavocracy were comprehensively epitomized by Dr. Joseph P. Thompson, pastor of the leading Congregational Church of New York City, Broadway Tabernacle, from 1845 to 1871, and one of the founders of the Independent, the outstanding religious paper of the North. The Southern economic order created and maintained four classes, harmful to freedom: (1) The enslaved population, increasing in numbers, in the awareness of the wrong endured, and in the purpose of revenge; (2) the turbulent common people, ripe for tumult, and ready tools of designing men; (3) the slaveholders, ever dangerous to liberty, and (4) the politicians, of the serpentine school, wearing the badge of slavocracy.³⁹

"The Barbarism of Slavery" was the subject of an article which appeared in the Advocate (Methodist) of Buffalo in the autumn of 1861. The author was convinced that slavery would cause white civilization to decline and fall, causing a return to the dark ages. The writer luridly portrayed the cruelty, the inhumanity, and the brutalization of slavery. The brutal deeds of the slave-owner thus inevitably debased the character of master, children, and the social order.⁴⁰

The Rev. W. S. Philips of Wethersfield, Connecticut, added his personal testimony concerning the iniquity of slavery. On the 13th of July, 1862, he sailed for Port Royal, having received a commission in the Freedmens' Relief Association. In September 1862 from St. Helena Island, South Carolina, he wrote his experiences to a Connecticut religious journal:

I have had an opportunity of learning what slavery is since I have been here. I see thousands of all ages who can neither read nor write; I see hundreds of families whose heads have never been married according to the laws of God and man, and the marriage relation treated as a thing of naught; I see daily scores of illegitimate children; I see the iron yoke and shackle which were used by the slave holder to gall and confine the slave; I see the scars of cruelty upon the features and limbs of the contrabands, and say, O! monster slavery! These are

³⁹The Independent (New York), XIII, No. 658, 4-5.

⁴⁰XII, No. 609, 1. ". . . men who pursue their brothers with bloodhounds, who sell maidens at auction, who flog naked women and girls, as regardless of their presence as if they were dogs, who practice all inhumanities of manacles, whippings, and burnings at the stake, which are necessary to keep in subjection a brutalized and crushed race, must become barbarian--they and their children of necessity lapse into a semi-civilized state."

only a few of thy bitter fruits! The tendency of the whole situation is to licentiousness, ignorance, and murder. . . .⁴¹

The decline of Southern morals was treated by the editor of the Christian Register (Unitarian) of Boston in the autumn of 1862. Southern morals had been on the down grade for fifty years attended by race domination, restriction of general education, disdain for common labor, and slavery extension until the nation was in the deadening grip of the Slavocracy.⁴²

A slashing attack upon the morals of Southern planters was launched by Chaplain N. L. Brakeman of the 21st Indiana Regiment, in a letter to the Western Christian Advocate (Methodist) in 1863. He discovered that numerous gambling towns existed in the South, owned by the planters of means. The planters lived beyond their means and were in constant debt to commission merchants and others. The morals of the planters and the prodigal son in Holy Writ, were identical. Such immoral persons naturally despised decency, purity and honesty. Chaplain Brakeman wrote:

Small towns do not flourish in the South and are generally little 'cities of the plain' for iniquity, which is perfectly natural, since the entire South is but a magnificent Sodom. . . . Planters are generally the proprietors of these little towns, and also the principal players and patrons of the gaming tables and drinking holes. In these diminutive sinks of great sin, money by the thousands, slaves, and even entire plantations. . . . have changed hands. . . . Planters are 'prodigal sons,' who spend their substance with harlots and in riotous living. . . . They must despise humble virtue, honorable labor, real worth, moral excellence and intellectual superiority; and override. . . . everyone they choose to esteem beneath them. . . .⁴³

The Mistakes of the Rebellion was the sermon-topic of the Rev. Alexander H. Vinton, Rector of St. Marks Church-in-the-Bow-erie (Episcopal), New York, at the Thanksgiving service of 1863.

⁴¹Christian Secretary (Hartford), XLI, No. 2111, 2.

⁴²XLI, No. 41, 161. "For the last half century the moral course of the Southern leaders has been downward. By the habit of domination over a subject race, all respect for any but the governing class has been obliterated. Enmity to the education of the masses, contempt for honest labor, and determination to extend the slave institution till it controlled the nation, have been the leading characteristics and purposes of Southern leaders."

⁴³(Cincinnati), XXX, No. 11, 82. "But industry and economy are strangers here, and the planter with all his wealth, possession and pride, is far from being truly independent; he lives in advance of his means and the commission merchant and others have a lien upon his possessions so that he can hardly call it his own. . . ."

He felt that the characteristics of the Southern people determined the state of mind of the South. They were

not largely educated. . . . grown up in the indolence of absolute power, despised the labor which lay at the foundation of our mechanical, manufacturing, commercial, and educational success. . . . Accustomed to act from whim, from passion, or from will. . . . they had no conception of a principle as supreme above impulse. . . . a code which exalted the sentimental graces. . . . which frowned upon an insult, but warranted an injustice. . . . which taught him to be gallant, and permitted him to be unchaste, to be polished in manner and rotten in conscience, generous yet grasping, hospitable, yet cruel at the pleasure of his passions, courtly in the saloon and savage in the courtyard. . . .⁴⁴

Dr. Vinton had been the pastor of Phillips Brooks in Boston, and had been a profound influence in his formative years.⁴⁵ He was one of the leading, if not the outstanding preacher in the Episcopal Church in that era, and also influential in its deliberative councils.⁴⁶

"Different habits and customs which grow naturally out of the different systems of Free and Slave labor" was the suggestive idea from the Episcopal journal, the American Quarterly Church Review of New York in an article published in 1864.⁴⁷

Many Northern clergymen firmly believed that the Southern social order was profoundly influenced by the slavocracy, that the ethics and morals of the planter slave-owner were largely molded by the labor system of slavery. An incisive portrayal of the far reaching effects of slavery upon both South and North was written by the editor of the Christian Advocate and Journal (Methodist) of New York in 1864. Slavery had corrupted and brutalized the conscience of that section, had inflamed the lust of domination, developed an intolerance toward opposition which resulted in vindictive spite toward the North. The South for years had boasted its superiority over the North, and was thoroughly enraged when the North denied that assumption. The editor stated: "The Southerners have long lived in the conviction that the Northern people were a mean, spiritless, and mercenary race, utterly unworthy to to be joined in terms of equality with themselves. . . ."⁴⁸

⁴⁴(New York: George F. Nesbitt, 1863), p. 28.

⁴⁵C. C. Tiffany, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 544.

⁴⁶A.V.G.Allen, op. cit., p. 8. ⁴⁷XV, No. 4, 541-75.

⁴⁸XXXIX, No. 48, 380.

Southern white racial supremacy created not only a superiority complex with reference to negroes, but also toward Northern whites as well.

The Rev. Phillips Brooks in his Lincoln Memorial sermon in 1865, preached at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity in Philadelphia, declared:

Slavery was a barbarian institution. The same spirit which was blind to the wickedness of breaking sacred ties, of separating man and wife, of beating women till they dropped down dead, of organizing licentiousness and sin into commercial systems, of forbidding knowledge and protecting itself with ignorance, of putting on its arms and riding out to steal a state at the beleagured ballot-box away from Freedom the spirit that gave man the ownership of man in time of peace has found out yet more terrible barbarisms for the time of war.⁴⁹

The Southern barbarous slavocracy as a term, a phrase, a symbol--became for the Northern Clergy a vicious demon, a diabolical devil, and an insidious iniquity--to be cast out of the life of the American people, both North and South, for its influences had spread throughout the United States as well as the former confederacy.

The Apostate Religion of the South

Southern Christianity or the theological and ethical position of Southern Christian Churches, was thoroughly orthodox. Religion in the South, by and large, supported the civilization, culture, and social order south of the Mason and Dixon Line. To the Northern clergy in most instances, such support was deemed servility and subserviency to the status quo in the body politic; while to the Southern Ministry, their position was supreme loyalty and devotion. The Northern Clergy, at home in their own realm of religion, ably probed the faith of their clerical brethren across the sectional border.

A survey of Southern Christianity was set forth in an editorial in the Christian Register (Unitarian) of Boston in 1857. The Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists are the only denominations referred to by name.

. . . . the least offensive of Protestant denominations at the South is the high and dry Episcopal Church, so conservative, is ecclesiastically established that it can take little notice of what is politically or socially unjust. Next in acceptance

⁴⁹The Life and Death of Abraham Lincoln, pp. 12-18.

comes the widespread Presbyterian fold, not much more republican in polity, but still oligarchic and semi-prelatic. . . . The humbler and more democratic sects recede in the same proportion from Rome and from the mad enthusiasm for slavery. The Methodists, when they pretend to bishops, are most in favor with the admirers of the Patriarchs and their institutions. The so-called Protestant Methodists, repudiating even quasi-Episcopacy of their more lordly brethren, stand in bad odor at the South, as they cannot quite forget that their own founder who was never a bishop, used to call slavery the sum of all villanies. The Baptists flourish south of the Mason-Dixon line in proportion as they sink Roger William's principles of liberty and encourage the growth of a hard shell over them. . . . Congregationalists do not flourish in the thick atmosphere of slavery, and least of all those most consistent and thorough-going Congregationalists who encourage all freedom of thought and consequently all other legitimate freedom protesting against popish subserviency to human masters in any shape.⁵⁰

The editor therefore implied that the more rigid and ecclesiastical the polity of a denomination the greater the support of the status quo of the social order and the political and social evils of slavery; while the more democratic the organization of a church, the greater its demand for a change in the established order and the greater the opposition to slavery and other social ills. The writer did not include his own denomination, the Unitarian, in this survey.

After the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861, two editorials appeared in the same journal in June and August of that year, stressing the conflict of Northern and Southern Christian theological and Biblical interpretation. "A Religious War" was the suggestive caption of the editorial.

'It is a war of religions.' The South is very fond of the idea that it is blessed with the purest and most unadulterated Orthodoxy, while the North is heretical and fatally philanthropic. . . . They find slavery in the Bible, and they hold slaves, and therefore they imagine themselves the most clearly identified champions of the Bible. Advocacy of slavery is defence of God's holy Word. Dying for the peculiar institution of the South is beatific martyrdom in the cause of Christ. Their 'religious war' resolves itself into a war for the right to enslave human beings. . . .⁵¹

The editor essayed to silence the claims of Bishop Polk of the Episcopal Church of the South, who asserted that the Southern "cause has for its object nothing less than the preservation of the purity of religious truth," and that their cause was the "cause of Heaven." The Bishop felt that the United States Govern-

⁵⁰XXXVI, No. 9, 34.

⁵¹Ibid., XL, No. 25, 98.

ment was "under the prime inspiration of an infidel horde" and that the Northern army brought "with it the withering influence of the infidelity of New England and Germany combined!"⁵² The reply of the editor was: "This seems to us of the quiet North very much like raving. . . . If Liberal Christianity had been the universal religion of the South, we should hardly have had this rebellion. Perhaps we should not have had so long its prime moving cause [slavery]."⁵³ The Southern Churches adhered to a literal and strict construction of the "Christian constitution," the Bible, while Northern Christianity, in the main, either avoided the interpretation of the slavery issue, or advocated a loose construction and interpretation of the Bible, or shared the literal views of the South.

In the autumn of 1861 the Christian Inquirer (Unitarian) of New York City discussed the theme: "Religion in the War" and took the position that in the best sense the Civil War was "a religious war." The war objectives of both North and South were compared which revealed the religious principles and ideals of both sections.

The South makes this war on the strength of passion; the North makes the war on the strength of principle. The South fight for a feeling; the North fight for an idea. The question at the South is empire; aggrandizement, slavery, local independence, state-rights; the question at the North is liberty, law, union, nationality, loyalty, republicanism. . . . a war for the "rights of human nature. . . ." ⁵⁴

The Unitarian editor of the Boston sheet, the Christian Register charged Southern religion with both the support of the institution of slavery and the coercive effort in support of the same, the rebellion.

This whole dreadful rebellion has had close relations with the religion of the South. It is a matter of boasting that, after the press, the clergy have been its most potent stimulators. Slavery, its essence and life, is preached as a divine institution. No war has seen so many clergymen in the ranks armed to the teeth. . . . ⁵⁵

That Southern religion was responsible for the lower level of civilization, for the unrepubli- can class-dominated oligarchies, for the paucity of creative theological literature, and for the

⁵²Ibid., No. 33, 130.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴XVI, No. 8, 2.

⁵⁵XLI, No. 15, 58.

demoralization of the South, was the accusation of Rev. Everett Hale in the summer of 1862. This Boston Unitarian declared

. . . . the demoralization of the Southern country, and its indifference to a higher civilization to the religion it has pretended to embrace. . . . to the formulas of a creed-bound, dogmatic, sacrificial religion. . . . Since this literature of this nation was born, now nearly a century, there has not been published by any Southern theologian a volume of theology, in any department, which has made the slightest ripple on the theological thought of the world. . . . The religious system which, under the forms of the Baptist Church, the Methodist, the Episcopal, and the Presbyterian, has been the only system current in these states, is powerless to lift them to a higher civilization. . . . The Southern States, under such influences have never become republics. They have been, as they are, oligarchies governed by a class. . . .⁵⁶

Orthodox Southern Christianity was powerless to shake off the shackles of slavery from the body politic, was the conviction of the Rev. W. H. Fish (Unitarian) of Cortland, New York, in 1863.

Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, and the like, as to their fundamental ideas. . . . are congenial with slavery; and they are to-day, therefore, at the South, sanctifying and sustaining 'the peculiar institution,' and the secession, treason, and rebellion generated by it. . . . popular orthodox theology is not, in its nature, civilizing and humanizing. . . . The intellectual and moral atmosphere of Boston, and not of Charleston, is the atmosphere of our hope. . . .⁵⁷

Mr. Fish felt that a liberal not a conservative interpretation of Christianity was the hope of the South, a religious program that included a central objective of slavery-elimination.

In 1864, correspondence from Norfolk, Virginia, to the Congregationalist of Boston, specifically charged the Southern clergy with disloyalty, stating that "the pulpit here [South] more than at the North, is the educator of the people." The Southern people remained true to the United States until the "pulpit led the way to the dark gulf of disunion. The ministry of the South went mad on slavery, and prepared the people for what they believed to be a holy war. . . ."⁵⁸

At the close of the war, the editor of the Christian Times and Illinois Baptist of Chicago portrayed the Southland as a land of spiritual darkness in dire need of a Gospel of Light. The South in 1865 was an area not so "extended but fully as benighted as any portion of Afghan or Hindoostan, where a 'pure

⁵⁶The Christian Register (Boston), XLI, No. 34, 133.

⁵⁷Ibid., XLII, No. 38, 149.

⁵⁸XVI, No. 12, 46.

religion' may be taught, and 'a new and purer civilization' may be introduced. . . ."⁵⁹

Southern Christianity was an apostate faith from the viewpoint of the Northern Clergy who discussed this theme. Infrequent are the accounts treating Southern religion and these largely from Unitarian pens, whose disdain of orthodox theology, was well known. The apostasy was due to religious support of the Southern social order, system of labor, secession and war. This loyalty was based upon a literalistic interpretation of the Scriptures. The ministers of the South were deemed "fallen from grace" because of their enthusiastic devotion to the Southern cause.

Northern Clerical Apologists

There were, however, several Northern clergymen who had a much higher opinion of the Southern way of life than did the majority of their clerical brethren, and who expressed their views in publications that gained a widespread hearing, with accompanying approval at the South and condemnation at the North.⁶⁰

The Rev. Nehemiah Adams, a Bostonian Congregationalist, made a three months tour of the South, covering in 1854 the communities of Richmond, Virginia, Columbia, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia. His impressions of the Southern negro apparently contradict those of the orthodox abolitionist or anti-slavery northern clergymen. He wrote his observations in a pamphlet entitled, A South-Side View of Slavery. The negroes in Savannah impressed him as follows: "a better looking, happier, more courteous set of people I had never seen. . . . unconscious of any feeling or restraint. . . . they did not act like a driven, overborne people, stealing about with sulky looks, imbruted by abuse, crazed, stupidly melancholic. . . . " The men were "respectable in their attire," the women of "good appearance," and the children "as bright, affectionate, and capable as other children." As to the conduct of the negroes especially at night, exclusive of petty misdemeanors, Mr. Adams found the city streets "quiet," with an "absence of mobs" and that the negroes were not "predisposed to violence and insubordination," and that in "a well regulated

⁵⁹XII, No. 31, 2.

⁶⁰R. L. Stanton, The Church and the Rebellion (New York: Derby & Miller, 1864), p. 207.

southern household. . . . the rod is out of sight. . . . " and that "if the colored people of Savannah, Columbia, and Richmond are not, as a whole, a happy people, I have never seen any. . . ." ⁶¹

Treating the advantages of slavery, Mr. Adams noted that "a strong sentiment protects the person or the slave against annoyances and injuries. . . . Boys and men cannot abuse another man's servant. Wrongs to his person are avenged. . . ." and that pauperism was prevented by slavery in that "every slave has an inalienable claim in law upon his master for support for the whole of life. He can not be thrust into an almshouse, he can not become a vagrant, he can not beg his living, he can not be wholly neglected when old and decrepit. . . ." Treating religion, he discovered there was probably "in many places at the South a larger proportion of the slaves than the whites have given evidence of being the children of God. . . ." and that there "is far more faith in the South [treating both races], taken as a whole than with us" (those in the North). ⁶²

Admitting the disadvantages, Mr. Adams sought to reveal the extenuating circumstances. While calling the slave auction a "revolting feature" he goes on to say:

. . . . the sale of a negro. . . . is not reckless, unfeeling thing in the towns at the south, where the subjects of the sale are from among themselves. . . . In settling estates, good men exercise as much care with regard to the disposition of the slaves as though they were providing homes for white orphan children. . . . Slaves are allowed to find masters and mistresses who will buy them. . . .

Negro traders are "the abhorrence of all flesh" and cruel slave-owners "are. . . . much detested and avoided at the south. . . ." He furthermore observes that there is an "injurious effect of slave labor upon the soil," that "labor performed by menial persons becomes disreputable in eyes of children [of whites]," that "slaves invent little or nothing. . ." that "slave labor is in many cases oppressively expensive. . . . It takes more than hands to do the same amount of work than with us. . . ." and that "servants are hearty, and great consumers, frequently costing more for their food than the rest of the family. . . ." He concluded

⁶¹Nehemiah Adams, A South-Side View of Slavery (Boston: T. R. Marvin, 1855), pp. 18, 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 24, 44, 43, 94.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 62, 38, 47, 53, 46, 72, 78, 132, 89, 90.

that: "to be a slave at the south is an evil or not according to the character and habits of the master. . . . Religion in the master destroys every thing in slavery which makes it obnoxious; and not only so, it converts the relation of the slave, into an effectual means of happiness. . . ." Mr. Adams explained the purpose of his book: that "it does not defend slavery. It aims to show what religion has done to mitigate its curse, and how we can in the most effectual way help to remove it. . . ." His other incidental aim was "to defend humane and Christian slaveholders from the many aspersions cast upon them. . . ." ⁶³

The Rev. Samuel Seabury (Episcopalian) of New York City in 1861 wrote a theoretical apologetic for Southern slavery as a means of restoring the good will and harmony between sections. His treatise was titled: American Slavery Distinguished from the the Slavery of English Theorists and Justified by the Law of Nature. Heartily condemning abolitionists and anti-slavery workers in general, he desired two fixed principles of action: (1) The toleration of domestic slavery on grounds of both justice and expediency; and (2) The resolute prohibition and, as far as possible, the annihilation of the slave-trade. ⁶⁴ He did not treat philosophically the Southern Way of Life.

Bishop John Henry Hopkins, the Episcopal prelate of Vermont, startled the world of American Christendom by publishing a pamphlet, re-published later with a series of letters addressed to his critic, the Right Reverend Alonzo Potter, Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Philadelphia, under the long title, A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery from the Days of the Patriarch Abraham to the 19th Century. The dates of publication and reprinting are 1861 and 1864. His views re-color the standard beliefs concerning the Southern Slavocracy as held by Northern clerical leaders. Taking his general stand upon the blessing of slavery, he said:

and yet to the Guinea negro, sunk in heathen barbarism, it would be a happy change to place him in the hands of a Southern master. . . . that very slavery, in my humble judg-

⁶³Ibid., pp. 90, 217; The Quincy (Ill.) Whig Republican, May 4, 1865, reported: "The Rev. Dr. Adams and Wendell Phillips, esq., both delivered good Union, North-side addresses the other day. Their conversions are remarkable."

⁶⁴Samuel Seabury, American Slavery (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861), pp. 250, 312.

ment has raised the negro incomparably higher in the scale of humanity; and seems, in fact, to be the only instrumentality through which the heathen posterity of Ham have been raised at all. . . . I believe that the number of negroes Christianized and civilized at the South, through the system of slavery, exceeds the product of those missionary labors [U.S. and English African missions], in a proportion of thousands to one. . . .

Discussing the religious aspects involving slavery, he wrote:

In the Providence of God, the negro slavery of the South has been the means of saving millions of those poor creatures from the horrible state in which they must otherwise have lived and died. It has raised them on the scale of humanity, and brought them toward civilization under the light of religious truth. . . . slavery in the hands of the Southern masters has been a blessing. . . . to redeem them from a far more bitter bondage in Africa. . . . to train them up to the civilization of the Gospel, to qualify a portion of them to plant the State of Liberia, and to enroll five hundred thousand communicants amongst the professed Christians of the South. . . .⁶⁵

Then covering the usual topic of concern, the treatment of the slave by the master, Bishop Hopkins wrote:

to prove the general fact, to which there are a few exceptions, namely, that the southern slaveholders are just and kind to their slaves, and that the negro race, under their care, are far better provided for, both temporally and spiritually, than the laboring classes in England, or the free negroes among ourselves. . . . the general treatment which the slaves receive is such as would become a Christian people. . . . that the cases of severe or inhuman usages were rare and exceptional, and that, as a general rule, the negroes were really what the Southern people esteemed them--the happiest laborers in the world. . . . the masters of our southern slaves are not heathen, but as good Christians, in general, as their defamers. . . . the relation of the master to the slave in the Southern States, involves no sin, provided the treatment of the slave be in accordance with the Scriptures. . . .⁶⁶

Mr. Hopkins stressed the economic privilege of the slave: "he receives a larger compensation, on the whole, than any of us would choose to pay in the support of himself from his birth to his burial, and the support besides of wife and children, in sickness and in health, in childhood and old age, without any danger of the poorhouse, or of starvation. . . ." This Bishop of Philadelphia background and of Vermont diocese was one of the most roundly denounced church leaders in the North, both within

⁶⁵ John Henry Hopkins, View of Slavery (New York: W. I. Pooley, 1864), pp. 34, 39, 40, 69, 350, 327.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 327, 80, 349.

and without his own communion. But when we understand the purpose of his tract, we find that he is really not pro-slavery for he says himself:

I desire to see the Southern institution abolished as soon as it can be, peaceably, lawfully, and with a just regard to the best interests of all concerned. . . . I have never been in favor of the perpetual bondage of the negro race, and never opposed their peaceable and gradual enfranchisement. . . .⁶⁷

Here, then were three moderates, or those who wished the issues settled peacefully; not fire eaters, who supported the Southern way of life, one hundred per cent. But the way of the moderate is hard in the days of secession and war.

In general the Northern Clergy who treated the theme of Southern Philosophy or the Southern Way of Life, believed that it was based upon a civilization of despotism, a social order of caste, a barbarous slavocracy, widespread immorality, and a static religion.

Southern philosophy was believed to be a menace because it endangered both the North and the South. In the North, it tended to undermine the ideals of democracy and equality expressed through free speech, free thought, free pulpit, free press, free schools, and free labor. In the South, it tended to disintegrate the personality, the character, and the morals of all classes of whites and blacks.

Southern civilization with its political oligarchy, its social aristocracy, its class legislation, its limited educational opportunities, and its spirit of superiority, coercion, and intolerance confronted Northern civilization with its political democracy, its social equality, its universal justice, its unlimited educational advantages, and its spirit of co-operation, teamwork and tolerance.

These in essence were the beliefs, convictions, and opinions of those of the Northern clergy of such denominations as: Baptist, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, Protestant Episcopal, Unitarian, Universalist and Friend (Quaker), who have given these matters some consideration and have had their views published. Even the small minority which felt that there were redeeming values in the Southland, but preferred its peaceful dissolution. It is upon such a concept or pattern or frame of

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 332, 349.

reference as this that the Northern Clergy of the United States formulated their attitudes toward the South, fundamentally during the years of 1861-1865.

